

The American Crow

Corvus brachyrhynchos



Crow Basics



Crow Life: Range & Breeding

- The American Crow is found all over North America, from southern Canada down throughout the Continental US.
- The average lifespan of a crow that lives to adulthood is 14 years. A high percentage of crows die in their first year.
- Starting at two years of age, crows lay an average of 4 eggs per season, and the eggs take 18 days to hatch.
- Within 35 days, the formerly helpless babies are able to fly.



Baby crows' mouths start out pink on the inside, and as the crows age, this turns black, providing another way to determine a captured crow's age.



Tata, the oldest crow on record, lived to be 59 years old. She came to live with a family in New York as a baby, after she was blown out of her nest during a storm. She had cataracts, but was still very active to the end.

Social Life

- In the animal world, crows' social lives are most like humans.
- Both parents care for their young, and often, the young remain in the family unit to help their parents care for next year's brood.
- Crows engage in allopreening (grooming), to solidify social connections and improve their health.
- Uncommon in the animal world, crows have been seen caring for sick and dying crows, bringing them food, and keeping them company.



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Allopreening helps keep crows one of nature's cleanest birds,
and provides a calming, enriching social activity.

Intelligence

- Crows are considered among the smartest birds and have shown intelligence exceeding that of primates. They can actually make tools.
- Crows have extensive vocabularies, extending far beyond the simple “Caw!”.
- Crows in different parts of the country have different dialects, just like people.
- Crows recognize very subtle patterns in the behaviors of other animals and people.
- Crows have long memories for events and people. They can recognize a person’s face years after seeing it just once.

Problem-Solving

In addition to making tools from small objects like wire, crows have creative ability, and can utilize the world around them to make their lives easier.





A “sentinel” crow is typically appointed to look out for predators, food, and other useful pieces of information. The sentinel’s reports can warn other birds and wildlife of dangers, such as a nearby hawk.

Resident Territories

- Local crows have territories – areas they call their own – and you'll see them there in the morning, at dusk, and over night.
- Crows roost at night, and normally choose the same spot each evening.
- Crows feed all over the area, throughout the day.
- Crows eat bugs, grain, nuts, garbage, & carrion, and are helpful to farmers and the environment.



A single crow calls to his friends and family as night falls.

Migratory Crows

- When it begins to get cold in the northern United States and southern Canada, their crows head south.
- Terre Haute has been on their migratory path, and has been a final wintering destination, for many years.
- Crows like to follow rivers as they migrate.
- Crows love our corn fields (and the bugs that live in and around them), and as we've developed the area, they enjoy our lights and dumpsters.



Our garbage can draw crows – in this case, tasty corn chips make a meal for this crow.



When crows roost in a tree, they often perch like ornaments on the ends of and along the length of branches.

Crows seem to like a mix of both deciduous and evergreen trees when choosing a roost site.

They really like trees that are in a lighted area, so they can see owls and other predators at night.

Crow-Human Conflict

- When crows roost in areas where people live and work, their droppings, and sometimes destructive pecking on rooftops, can cause problems.
- Because crows are smart and observant, however, it's possible to educate them through the use of tools that make undesirable areas inhospitable to them.

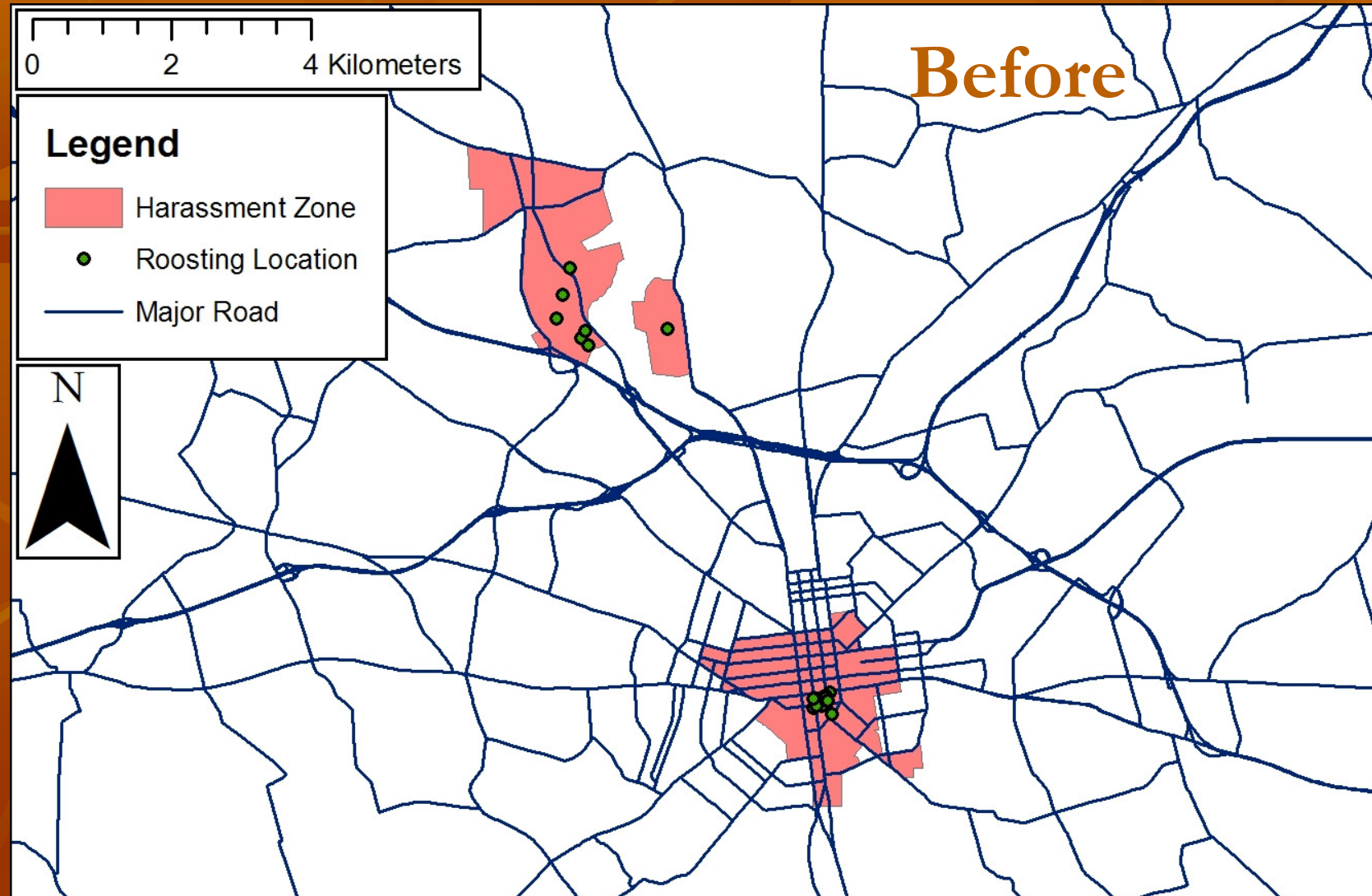
Moving Crows

- When crows choose a roost site that's undesirable for humans, loud noises and bright lights (pyro) can make them move.
- Being proactive, in whichever management technique you use, seems to give the best results.
- Areas where crows are not disturbed can become their new roost sites, once they realize which spots are which.
- Crows are determined, however, and will continue to return to areas that have features they like – so management must be an on-going process.

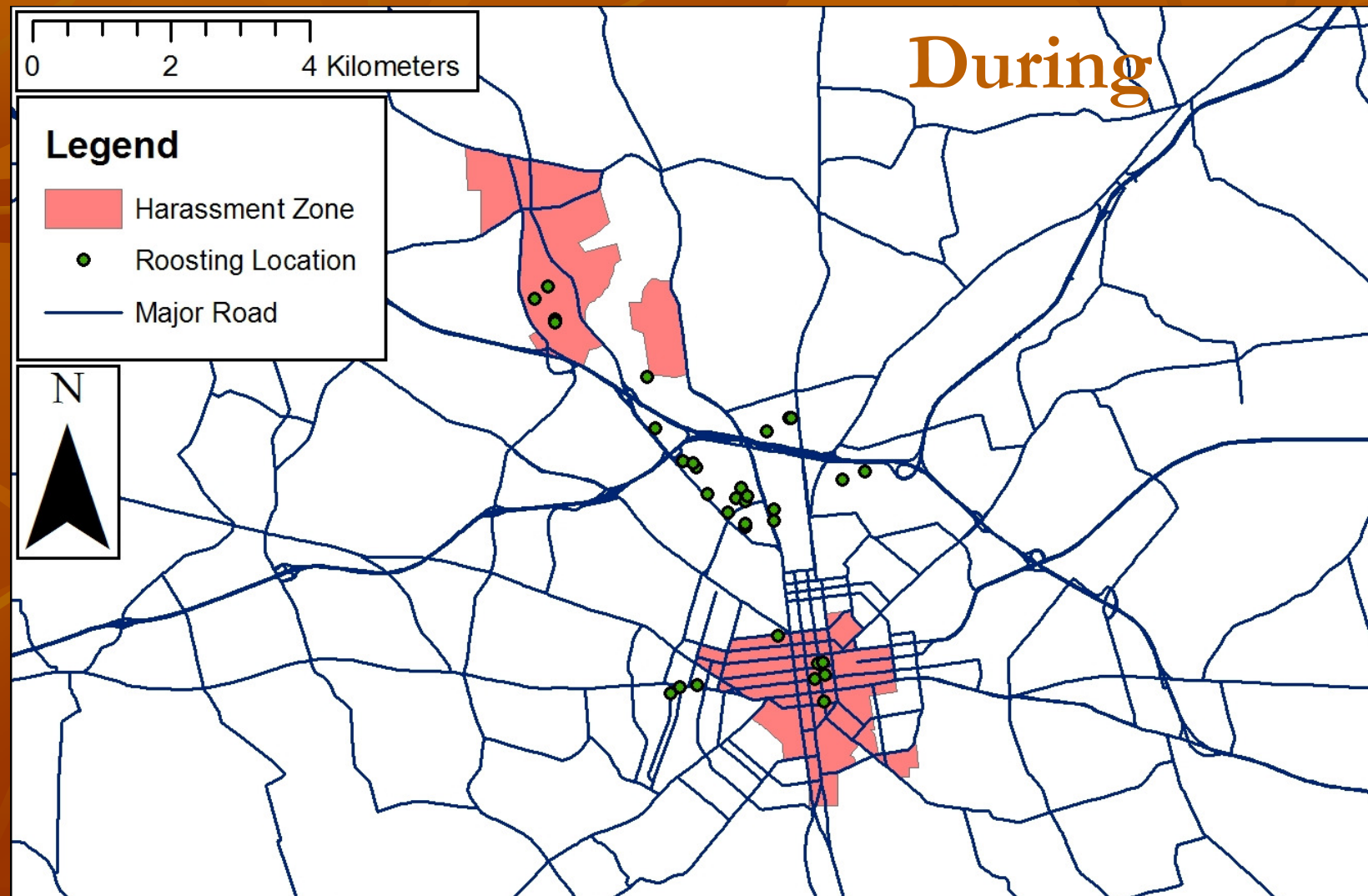
Moving Crows

- When using pyrotechnics to move crows, have a plan ahead of time. Decide where you want them to go, and send them that way by making noise in the opposite direction. For example, if you want them to go northwest, fire the pyros from a position southeast of the crows' current location.
- Timing is key. Crows cannot see at all at night – they are NOT nocturnal. If you try to move them when it's dark, they'll hunker down to avoid the danger of flying blind.
- Choose places where the crows CAN be and direct them to those spots. Don't let ANY harassment occur in or near those locations.

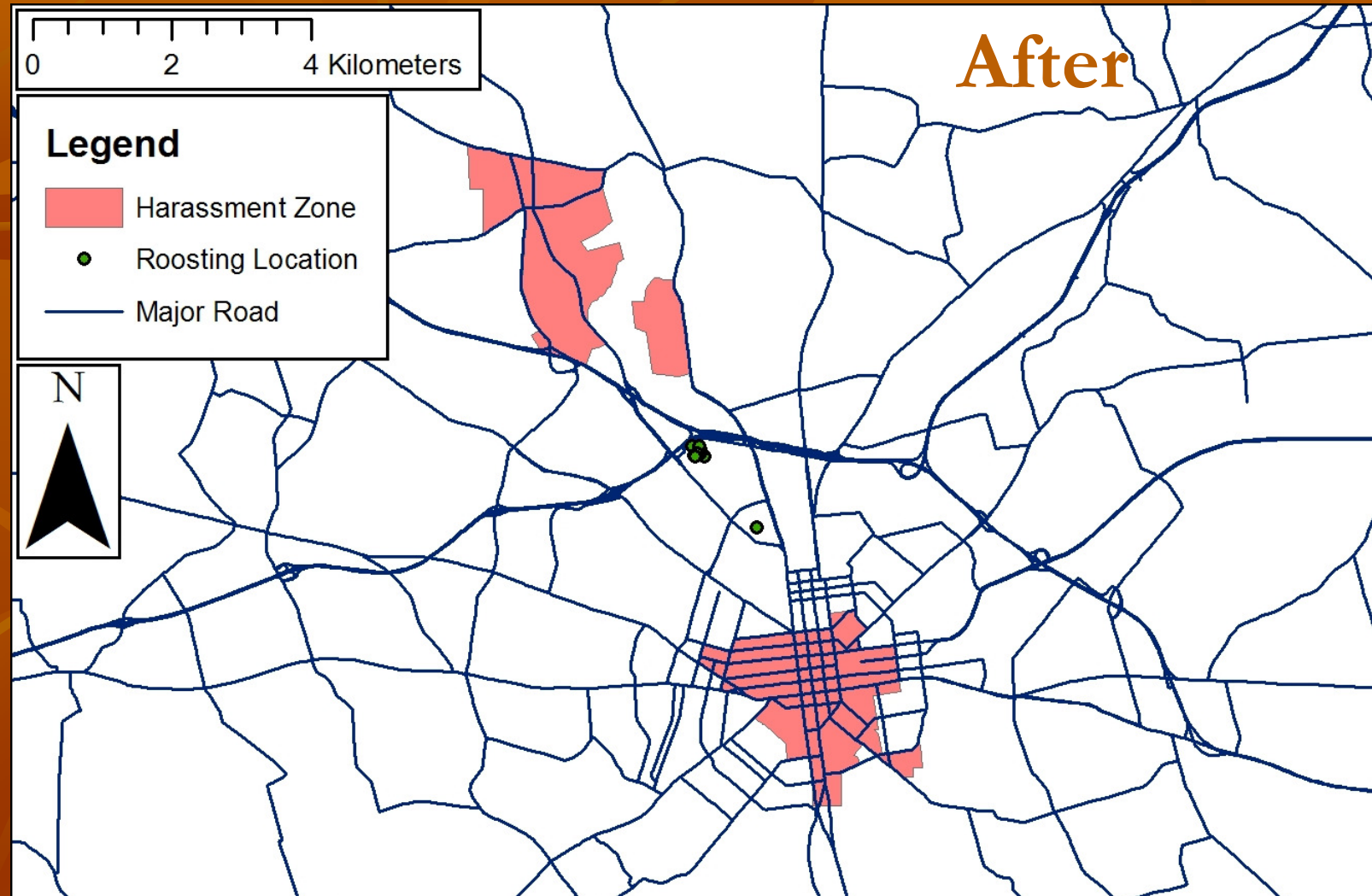
Management Effects in Lancaster, PA



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“Staging”, or gathering before dusk before moving to one or more roosting sites, is not a behavior we can change.

The Long Term

- Managing crows requires patience and the use of multiple methods – often serially or in combination.
- Each year that the crows return to Terre Haute, we may have to move them if they choose undesirable spots.
- Each year, however, we get a chance to improve our techniques for convincing them to leave spots where we don't want them to hang out.
- Lancaster, PA has seen a reduction in crows' attempts to roost in spots where we've discouraged them the previous year.

Humane & Safe Solutions

- While some people became very frustrated and wanted to use lethal methods to move crows, these methods are unsafe and very cruel.
- Humane methods, which annoy the crows and scare them away from certain locations, are more effective, safer, and much less expensive.
- Any method requires work, but being humane and protecting the environment are valuable goals, and worth our time and effort.

The background of the slide is a solid brown color with faint, stylized outlines of autumn leaves in a lighter shade of brown, creating a textured, seasonal effect.

Special thanks to:
Laurie Ulrich Fuller
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